



Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
Office of Highway Safety

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What's your excuse?

Reasons for not buckling up don't add up

FRANKFORT, Ky. – Excuses, excuses. Those who drive or ride without using seat belts often have excuses.

But how do excuses stack up against statistics that show seat belts save lives? As Kentuckians prepared to travel this Memorial Day weekend, the Kentucky Office of Highway Safety (KOHS) wants all motorists to forget the excuses and listen to the facts.

“Thousands of lives could be saved and critical injuries could be prevented if occupants would just buckle up,” said KOHS Executive Director Chuck Geveden.

Statistics for 2009 indicate 398 (61.3 percent) of the 649 people who were killed in motor vehicles last year in Kentucky were not wearing a seat belt. When worn correctly, seat belts are proven to reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat occupants by 45 percent – and by 60 percent in pickup trucks, SUVs, and minivans.

Despite a wealth of data showing that seat belts save lives – and also despite implementation of a primary seat belt law – Kentucky's 80 percent seat belt usage rate lags behind the national rate of 84 percent.

What reasons do people give for not using a seat belt?

Seat belts can cause injuries, such as a broken collar bone.

Seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate to critical injury by 50 percent.

I don't need a seat belt when driving at slow speeds or on short trips.

Most crash deaths occur within 25 miles of home and at speeds less than 40 mph.

I might be trapped if my car catches fire or becomes submerged.

Crashes involving fire or water amount to one-half of 1 percent of all crashes.

I don't need to wear a seat belt because my vehicle has air bags.

Air bags are designed to work in combination with seat belts, providing supplemental protection during certain types of crashes.

It makes me feel restrained.

That's the function of a seat belt! All seat belts allow free movement of the occupant until a crash occurs or until you slam the brakes. Nationwide, 75 percent of people ejected from a motor vehicle are killed.

It irritates the skin on my neck or chest.

Most vehicles have adjustable shoulder belts that can be raised or lowered for comfort.

I am too big to wear a seat belt; it doesn't fit.

Purchasing a seat belt extender may solve this issue.

This is just government trying to control individuals.

Every state has traffic laws that set limits on individual behavior. For instance, it is illegal to drink and drive or to speed. It also is illegal to drive or ride without a seat belt. Driving is a privilege, not a right.

I can't reach my children if they should need attention.

If you're trying to feed, calm or play with your baby in the backseat, attention is not focused on the road and both lives are at risk. Please pull over to a safe location if you need to tend to your child.

I have a medical condition, I can't wear it.

This can be a valid excuse but only if a doctor provides you with a written medical note.

The KOHS is coordinating the annual Click It or Ticket campaign in partnership with 59 law enforcement agencies, including Kentucky State Police. Traffic safety checkpoints and saturation patrols began Monday, May 24, and will run through June 6.

"Although the title of the campaign emphasizes the law – that if you don't wear a seat belt you will be ticketed – the goal of the campaign is to educate the public about the importance of wearing a seat belt and, most importantly, save lives" Geveden said.

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